

## THE SETTING

353 these are generally out of order and are used rather as decorations than to tell the time.

415 Household utensils are generally made by the local potter. But  
 [556] shining brassware, including a few large pots for storing water, are a mark of respectability. Food is served on brass, bell-metal or aluminium plates. Water is drunk from metal mugs or brass beakers. In some houses a couple of china cups and saucers and a few glass plates are also to be seen.

342 *The Penkutillu.* This type of house is smaller and less ostentatious,  
 351 and is built by average cultivators with small holdings, who are neither rich nor poor according to village standards. These houses also have a courtyard and possibly a backyard; a verandah and two or three rooms which are used for various purposes. The walls are of stone, the floor of mud and the roof is tiled. The cattle-shed is generally close to the living-room and there is neither latrine nor bathroom in the house.

352 This type of house is also decorated with carvings on the doors,  
 353 and designs are painted on the wall. In such houses furniture is regarded as a luxury; there may be a few bedsteads, some small wooden stools and possibly a crude chair or two. People with city contacts decorate the walls of their houses with commercial calendars or coloured magazine covers. The household utensils in this type of house are, except for metal plates used for serving food, of  
 415 earthenware, even water being stored in clay pots. Yet respectability demands that such a house should have at least some brass utensils. These are greatly coveted by the ambitious housewife.

[556] 342 *The Gudse.* These are the commonest type of dwellings found in Telangana, and are indeed the most numerous in Shamirpet. The walls of these huts are either made of mud or they are made of wattle-screen and plastered with mud. The roof is always thatched. The hut is built in a small enclosure and has generally only one  
 352 room, from which the kitchen is partly partitioned. These huts have  
 415 very little furniture and all household utensils are the wares of the local potter. The few metal utensils which the family possesses are among the most treasured parts of the household property.

351 All the three types of village dwellings have some features in  
 [515] common. Almost all of them have some open space either at the front or at the back. This is generally enclosed. Here women bath and in times of emergency, such as illness or other incapacity, it may also be used as a latrine. During the rainy season

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to be organized by the village community as a whole. If smallpox, cholera or plague is reported in any nearby village or from Shamirpet itself, it has to fix the day on which the whole village shall perform religious worship in order to ward off the epidemic. It fixes the contribution which should be made by the different families to any communal undertaking. In any undertaking concerning the village as a whole the initiative often comes from the *panchayat*. For example, if a temple or shrine has to be constructed or a tank or well has to be repaired, the matter would be placed before the *panchayat*. This body would plan the measure and then proceed to fix all the details. It will determine the amount of the contributions to be raised, and collect it from each family. If it is necessary to approach the government for financial help in the matter, the *panchayat* would first thoroughly analyse the subject and examine all the possibilities. Only after such a discussion would it determine the precise steps to be taken. Similarly, if a complaint has to be made against any government official, the matter is first discussed by the *panchayat*. 623

In the village community there are several groups and factions; the various cliques often hold divergent views. However, at the meetings of the *panchayat* the minority almost always yields to the majority—mostly without any grumbling. But once the *panchayat* has risen a protégé of the dissenting clique may be instigated to defy the decisions of the council. With the emergence of several factions within the community, and the tacit encouragement given by some of the minority groups to certain offenders to ignore its decisions, the authority of the *panchayat* has been slightly weakened. In consequence, even when the *panchayat* has heard them and given its verdict, some cases drag on in a state of indecision. From time to time they come up for reconsideration, but two or three years often elapse before a final decision is made. Some long-drawn-out cases are decided by the active intervention of the Revenue or Police officials. But such cases are few. Only a comparatively rich person can defy the *panchayat*, for unless he is able to bribe one of the minority cliques, he cannot enlist their sympathy and support in the lengthy proceedings. In most of the ordinary cases the decision of the *panchayat* is binding and final. 623 573 [556]

It has been pointed out that the *panchayat* includes all the headmen of the different caste-groups as well as of the Muslim community. These headmen do not merely represent their respective 623 564

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE

According to the caste composition of the villages and existing social bonds between them, people belonging to one particular caste will have their own *panchayat* for a group of villages. Thus in the case of some castes ten to twenty villages have their own caste *panchayat*, while in the case of others thirty to forty villages together have a common council of this type. In some cases endogamous sub-castes have their own *panchayats*; but in many others the wider caste group comprising many sub-castes has a composite council of its own. Caste headmen representing each constituent village are the members of this council—although in actual practice other wealthy and influential, as well as vocal and assertive, persons also gradually come to occupy a seat in it. Serious breaches of the norms and traditions of the caste, as well as important intra-caste disputes, are heard and decided by these caste *panchayats*. Cases of divorce, failure in fulfilling agreements made before finalizing marriage arrangements, serious sexual lapses, and of breaches of the social norms of the caste, such as incest, breaches of the rules of endogamy and exogamy, eating forbidden food and pursuing a 'lower' occupation, etc., would be under the jurisdiction of such a caste *panchayat*. But it must be pointed out that there is no clear-cut distinction between the powers and functions of the caste *panchayat* and the village *panchayat*. For example, when a serious case of incest comes to their notice both these *panchayats* take action independently. Similarly, if a person belonging to one of the Hindu castes kills a cow or is found to have eaten beef, simultaneous action is likely to be taken by both the *panchayats*. In general, however, it can be laid down that matters of a primarily local interest are brought to the village *panchayat*, while those having a bearing on specific caste customs fall under the jurisdiction of the caste *panchayat*. A large number of marginal disputes may be heard by either, and often the local tradition defines their respective jurisdictions. As the *panchayat* in Shamirpet is sufficiently aggressive it has arrogated to itself a considerably wide range of powers.

While all villages and nearly all castes have their own *panchayats*, inter-village *panchayats* are formed from time to time when they are demanded by a special situation. They function as *ad hoc* arbitration committees. Conflicts between two villages, or between two parties belonging to different villages (and not drawn from one particular caste), often necessitate an inter-village

## WEB OF FAMILY TIES

- 829 natural and necessary: Only morons and cripples remain single.
- [581] Though it is rare for people to renounce their home and property in old age, old men and women excessively attached to material goods come in for a good deal of criticism, and people often remark about them, 'Will they carry their wealth with them to the other world when they die?' It is at this time that their thoughts turn more to religion and to the destiny of their souls in the future life, and it is now that they generally undertake pilgrimages to holy places. In a sense the broad essentials of the philosophy of the *ashramas* can be said to permeate the life and thought of the Hindu villagers. The village Muslims share these social attitudes with their Hindu neighbours. With conversion to Islam they have changed their religious faith, but in the socio-cultural spheres of life they still continue to have more or less the same basic attitudes as the Hindus. In their family ethics and ideals the two groups demonstrate considerable similarity.
- 581 To the village people the necessity of both marriage and family is self-evident. It is necessary that the family line should be continued. A male heir must be left. An unmarried person past the marriage age is an object of pity. A couple without a son are unhappy. Childlessness and inability to produce a male child on the part of a woman often lead to a polygynous household. Marriage is regarded as essential among all the castes and social groups in the village. In a community of 2,494 persons, demographic survey reveals the presence of only two single persons—both women. One of these is a deaf-mute; the other has been a victim of epileptic fits from her childhood and has in addition the unenviable reputation of being a thief. For the clean-caste Hindus the continuity of the family line is necessary for a further reason.
- [769] A male child must make a ceremonial offering of water to the spirits of his deceased parents and ancestors, without which their souls may not have peace. The untouchable castes as well as the semi-tribal groups also have this ritual in a modified form. The Muslims neither have this belief nor any attendant ritual, but they too share with the Hindus the sentiment against childlessness.

## 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

- 596 The patrilineal and patrilocal elementary or joint family is the normal type of family unit met with in this part of rural India.

## LEVELS OF LIVING

779 Muslim State, the Hindus had their revenge by pouring scorn  
 798 openly on Muslim religion and society. It was now the turn of the  
 Muslims to observe silence, and tolerate humiliation and insults.  
 At the time of our investigations, however, most of these passions  
 had subsided, and no significant tensions were observed. As  
 groups both Hindus and Muslims regard themselves as superior  
 [564] in point of religion. From the socio-economic point of view the  
 Muslims can be regarded as an exclusive caste whose social stand-  
 ing is roughly equal to that of the agricultural castes.

564 Caste as a factor of social differentiation is more significant. It  
 has been pointed out that in its structure, the caste system has  
 definitely a hierarchical character. Between the highest and the  
 lowest castes, there are several intermediate levels. The social  
 status of a person is largely determined by his caste. The mere fact  
 of birth in a particular caste gives a good initial start to some and  
 puts obstacles in the way of others. In a subsequent chapter I  
 propose to examine some of the stereotypes current in the village  
 community regarding the qualities and characteristics of different  
 castes; but notwithstanding these the relative position of the  
 different castes in the village community is determined by the  
 traditional scale.

554 Religion and caste are more or less fixed and permanent  
 factors. While change of faith is possible, and under certain cir-  
 cumstances a person can even descend from one of the higher  
 castes to the lowest, such changes are very rare. At any rate no one  
 takes recourse to them to bring about a change in his social status.

[797] The only case of change of faith recorded by us in the village is  
 that of the present headmaster of the school who was a Brahmin  
 to begin with, but later embraced Islam. No case of change of  
 caste came to our notice.

● 556 In a predominantly agricultural society it is natural to expect that  
 possession of land and cattle would contribute greatly to an indi-  
 vidual's social status. Birth into a family of landowners ensures  
 that a person will grow up to be a respected member of the village  
 community. Acquisition of land would very materially affect the  
 social position even of a person of humble birth, and if he does not  
 behave tactlessly it would greatly enhance his prestige. An un-  
 touchable Mala peasant is now counted among the influential  
 cultivators of the village and is given a place of honour in its  
 counsels. He is still an untouchable and would continue to remain

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one, but in village matters his voice is now more effective. He 554 ●  
insists on being regarded as low and humble, never offers his  
opinion unless it is specifically sought, and never fails to behave  
correctly towards the superior castes. Through this he earns the  
respect and admiration of the whole community. Again, two  
Madiga cultivators, belonging to the lowest untouchable caste  
who are now well-off and own land, are never forced to do free  
menial work like the other poorer members of their caste.

What is true of land ownership, is true also of the possession of  
other forms of wealth. Different kinds of houses denote different  
social status. The rich and the well-to-do people live in substan-  
tially built bhawanti-type houses. The average families have *pen-  
kutillu*-type houses; while the poorer people live in gudse huts.  
Along with the house go the other household possessions. Shining  
brassware, items of furniture, and other similar objects add to the  
prestige of a family. The significance of gold and silver ornaments  
possessed by women is also very great in this respect. In the fami-  
lies on the upper level there is keen rivalry among the women to  
acquire more and more ornaments of precious metals, so that their  
'worth' in the estimate of the community may rise. Clothing, food  
and the type of work done by its members largely go with the  
financial resources of the family. In determining the social status  
of a family due consideration should be given to these factors  
also.

In recent years government service has come to be looked upon 555  
as important and desirable. It ensures a fixed and steady income,  
and permits the possibility of close contact with higher officials.  
Because of the feudal and authoritarian tradition in the ad- [557]  
ministration of the State, even the minor district officials are  
viewed with awe and respect by the village-folk; and as such  
the minor village officials and menials who, having contact  
with them, can possibly influence them gain in prestige among  
their neighbours. Persons holding very small menial posts  
may not win the respect of the village community in general,  
but within their own income—and caste group—their prestige  
is noticeably enhanced. Those who hold office in the internal  
administrative set-up of the village, that is to say the village  
headman, the Ganadi and the members of the village council,  
enjoy very considerable prestige and influence by virtue of their  
office.

438 at a reduced price, generally 13 to 15 rupees per candy, while the market price in summer will be Rs. 23 to 29 per candy. Last year, 249 owing to the appearance of a competing company, Messrs. Simpson & Co., the price was Rs. 35 to 42 per candy. No interest is charged for such debts. (3) They invariably use false stones in weighing the jaggery in the fields, while in the village the company's stones are used. This results in an enormous profit.

With these three sources of profit, the private capitalist is able to realize a profit of Rs. 5 at least per cart (of 8 bags) while daily he sends 3 carts at least to the company's agent. The total export of the village during the summer will be from 17,000 to 20,000 bags; this year (1917) it is 18,000 bags, i.e., 6,000 candies.

556 The rich capitalist makes the largest profit out of this trade. Many of the villagers are now a class of capitalists, great or small. Many that were poor three or four years ago are now able to invest a few hundreds and start independent businesses in this line. There are three people who invested about Rs. 30,000 each this year.

465 The toddy tappers are not materially better off. As a class they are only a little above the level of absolute poverty, while individually, there are only four or five who own a property of Rs. 500. Though their gross earnings are from Rs. 20 to 25 for the three months, the net income will be Rs. 6 to 8 only.

The village barber and washerman earn at least Rs. 30 to 35 during the three months. The lime dealer earns 50 to 60 rupees. The Pariahs who carry firewood get wages at the rate of 4 annas to 6 annas per day. Owners of carts get rent at the rate of Rs. 2 per turn to carry jaggery from the field-huts to Nidadavolu, the headquarters of the company. Makers of tin-pots, used in boiling the toddy, get 100 to 150 rupees. Pariah women prepare baskets of palmyra leaves to hold the jaggery, for which they are paid Re. 1 per 100. Brahmans are employed to prepare the accounts and are paid Rs. 10 per mensem.

Besides these payments for services rendered (which are in the shape of jaggery in most cases) there are certain extra perquisites or "mamuls" which the toddy tapper is compelled to pay. These illegitimate exactions mount up to thousands of rupees. The village servants also get presents, while the coolies are profited by carrying rice or other articles to the fields. There are many small shops [545] opened by retail traders in the fields themselves for the benefit of the tappers; while the performance of two or three dramas, based on some popular mythological story by country actors is not of rare occurrence.

464 The effects on the village are innumerable and many sided. One of the greatest difficulties for the Indian labourer is want of proper employment; it is no exaggeration to say that many families are reduced to poverty, simply for want of sufficient local demand for their labour. This village is to a certain extent relieved of this anxiety during a season when, the fields being fallow, they have no agricultural occupation to attend to. Many a poor family would have long ago left the village but for this attraction. Industrially, it has raised the efficiency of every craft, by providing it with more work to turn out. While in all the other seasons the whole village is entirely agricultural in character, in summer it can be said to be industrial and commercial in tone.

1 [i.e., jaggery. -- Analyst]

Socially, it increases drunkenness in the lower classes; and I find more crimes in summer than in other seasons. 273 674

But it has turned the honest and sympathetic ryots into greedy money-lenders and capitalists. It has increased the lust for gold. True that the poorer classes have an opportunity of clearing off their family debts; true that they find sufficient food to eat in summer at least; true that there is more money in the village now than 20 years ago. But equally is it true that there are more debts now; that the gulf between the rich and the poor is widened more and more; that the once poor are now poorer and the once rich now richer. There is greater struggle, greater competition, and greater rises and falls of life. 178 556 477

*Economic history of the village.*—When compared with fifteen years ago, the village has, on the whole, progressed economically. True that estates once united are now split up into fragments; and that the once poor have now become poorer. True that there are cases where people borrow money and purchase land with it; and then sell it again to clear off that debt some years later. Still the village has improved. There is increase and improvement in agriculture. Many fields that were once forest are now brought under cultivation. There is more money in the village now than 20 years ago, more produce is now exported from the village than before. The introduction of the railway near by has revolutionized the commercial condition of the village. Prices have risen both of the commodities produced and of land in general, three or four-fold. There is a greater inflow of foreign goods into the village. Kerosene oil has completely driven out castor oil. There are sixteen Japanese wind-proof lamps in the village. The standard of living has decidedly been raised. Among the lower castes to eat solid food was a luxury; conjee, prepared of korra and ragi, was the food for all the lower castes, including Sudras. Now they all eat rice and cholam and wear better clothing. But the money is ultimately finding its destination into the hands of the rich money-lenders. Formerly there was enough corn in the land and there was a sort of self-sufficiency. Now there are more debts, consequently more ruin of families with the higher rates of interest, and greater servitude and misery. 178

If the Government were to open a sugar factory and utilize the jaggery, both the Government and the villagers would be profited. Wells can be very profitably sunk in the fields. But the ryots never do it, though it costs only Rs. 200. A ryot is prepared to spend even Rs. 1,500 in litigation but not Rs. 200 for a well in his fields, even though he is rich and knows that it is profitable. By example they may improve.

The Brahmans have almost lost their former property for want of any profession, while they incur heavy expenses for marriages, etc. Only one family is now well off. The Vaisyas too have lost their former lands by litigation, marriages, and other expenses. On the whole, the Sudras have grown richer, both with agriculture and the jaggery trade, and the rise of prices for their produce. The weavers, washermen, the Panchamas, many of the Sudras, are growing poorer; they are selling off the little lands they have for debts and other expenses.

Lands are sold chiefly to clear off old debts, though there are some cases where profits tempt people to purchase or sell. The 426

[i.e. The seasonal nature of industrial employment.—Analyst]